

# **Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Home Care, Nursing Homes and Mental Health Clinics**

## What is Environmentally Preferable Purchasing?

“Environmentally preferable purchasing” (EPP), also known as green purchasing, means buying products that have a reduced environmental impact while maintaining the same quality and performance. EPP also includes the gradual and ongoing process in which a healthcare provider continually refines and expands the scope of its efforts to select environmentally safe products and services. EPP may be as simple as buying recycled paper or as complex as considering the environmental impact of a product at each stage of its life, from when it is manufactured to when it is disposed of as a waste.



Environmentally friendly products have some of the following attributes.

- Mercury-free
- Non- or less toxic
- Recycled post-consumer content
- Minimal packaging
- Re-useable and/or recyclable
- Energy efficient
- Safer for patients, workers, and the environment

## Implementing an Environmental Preferable Purchasing Program

Procurement of most products and services go through the purchasing department. This makes it an effective point to apply actions to improve environmental performance because it is at this stage of money transfer and contract development that vendors can best be influenced.

1. Request support for EPP goals from top management in the form of a policy statement.
2. Create a list of preferred products and vendors and/or a list of chemicals and products to avoid purchasing.
3. Incorporate environmental language in requests for proposals (RFPs) and purchasing contracts. For example, request a minimum of 30 percent post-consumer recycled content for copy and writing papers, and envelopes.
4. Continually ask vendors and Group Purchasing Organizations for products that are environmentally preferable, such as non-vinyl IV bags and tubing.
5. Implement modest, measurable goals for EPP and monitor progress toward achieving them. Examples:
  - Reduce packaging waste or total solid waste by 20 percent in 12 months.
  - Eliminate purchasing of mercury-added products by next year.
6. Promote EPP achievements to workers, patients and the community.

## Environmental Preferable Purchasing Opportunities

More and more Internet resources are becoming available to identify EPP opportunities, such as latex free gloves, non-vinyl binders, re-usable sharp containers, and other medical and offices supplies. Check out Sustainable Hospitals Project at University of Massachusetts at Lowell at



[http://www.sustainablehospitals.org/cgi-bin/DB\\_Index.cgi](http://www.sustainablehospitals.org/cgi-bin/DB_Index.cgi) and Hospitals for a Healthy Environment at <http://www.h2e-online.org/tools/grnpurch/epp.htm>.

#### Pollution Prevention at Healthcare Facilities

Since 1998, the Department of Environmental Services' New Hampshire Pollution Prevention Program has promoted pollution prevention opportunities at healthcare facilities. This on-going project involves providing on-site assistance at participating facilities, setting up an infrastructure to promote continuous environmental improvement, and providing outreach and training activities to New Hampshire healthcare facilities.

For further information on Pollution Prevention at Healthcare Facilities, contact Sara Johnson, DES, at (800) 273-9469 or [sjohnson@des.state.nh.us](mailto:sjohnson@des.state.nh.us).

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